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STEVENSON AT MANASQUAN

CHARLOTTE EATON

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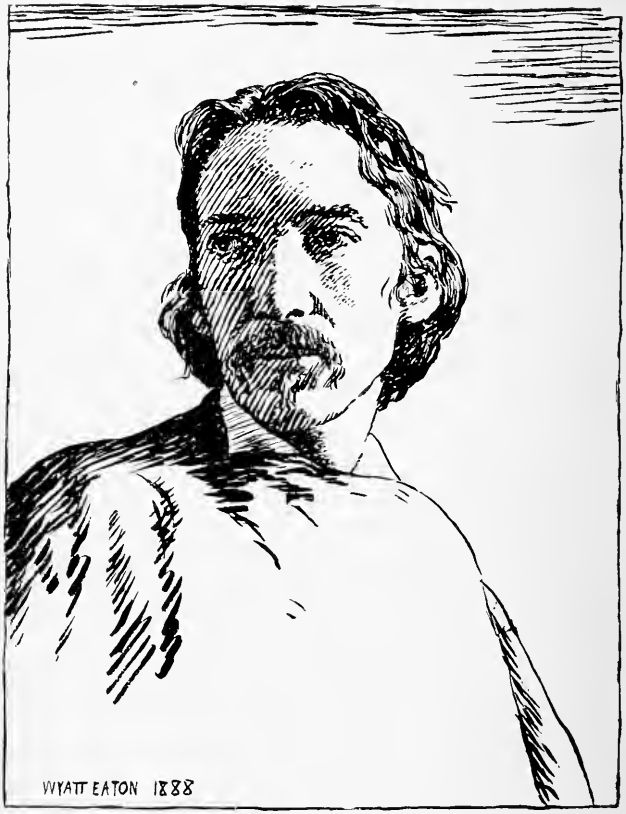

Pen and Ink Sketch of Robert Louis Stevenson, by Wyatt Eaton

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Stevenson at Manasquan

By

Charlotte Eaton

With a Note on the Fate of the Yacht "Casco" by Francis Dickie and Six Portraits from Stevenson by George Steele Seymour

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Three hundred copies of this book by Charlotte Eaton, Bookfellow No. 550, Francis Dickie, Bookfellow No. 716, and George Steele Seymour, Bookfellow No. 1, have been printed. Mrs. Eaton's memoir is an elaboration of one previously published by Thomas Y. Crowell Co. of New York under the title "A Last Memory of Robert Louis Stevenson"; Mr. Dickie's notes have appeared in the New York World, and Mr. Seymour's "Portraits" have appeared in "Contemporary Verse" and "The Star" of San Francisco.

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STEVENSON AT MANASQUAN

When I came face to face with Robert Louis Stevenson it was the realization of one of my most cherished dreams.

This was at Manasquan, a village on the New Jersey coast, where he had come to make a farewell visit to his old friend Will Low, the artist. Mr. Low had taken a cottage there that summer while working on his series of Lamia drawings for Lippincott's, and Stevenson, hearing that we were on the other side of the river, sent word that he would come to see us on the morrow.

"Stevenson is coming," was announced at the breakfast-table as calmly as though it were a daily occurrence.

Stevenson coming to Manasquan!

I was in my 'teens, was an enthusiastic student of poetry and mythology, and Stevenson was my hero of romance. Was it any wonder the intelligence excited me?

My husband, the late Wyatt Eaton, and Stevenson, were friends in their student days abroad, and it was in honor of those early days that I was to clasp the hand of my favorite author.

It was in the mazes of a contradance at Barbizon, in the picturesque setting of a barn lighted

by candles, that their first meeting took place, where Mr. Eaton, though still a student in the schools of Paris, had taken a studio to be near Jean François Millet, and hither Stevenson had come, with his cousin, known as "Talking Bob," to take part in the harvest festivities among the peasants.

These were the halcyon days at Barbizon, when Millet tramped the fields and the favorite haunts of Rousseau and Corot could be followed up through the Forest of Fontainebleau, before Barbizon had become a resort for holiday makers, or the term "Barbizon School" had been thought of.

Now, of all places in the world, the quaint little Sanborn Cottage on the river-bank, where we were stopping, seemed to me the spot best suited for a first meeting with Stevenson. The Sanborns were very little on the estate and the place had a neglected look. Indeed, more than that, one might easily have taken it for a haunted or abandoned place — with its garden choked with weeds, and its window-shutters flaunting old spider-webs to the breeze.

It was, of course, the fanciful, adventure-loving Stevenson that I looked forward to seeing, and I was not disappointed; and while others spoke of the flight of time with its inevitable changes, I felt sure that, to me, he would be just Stevenson who wrote the things over which I had burned the midnight oil.

He came promptly at the hour fixed, appearing on the threshold as frail and distinguished-

looking as a portrait by Velasquez. He had walked across the mile-long bridge connecting Brielle and Manasquan, ahead of the others, for the bracer he always needed before joining even a small company.

Shall I ever forget the sensation of delight that thrilled me, as he entered the room — tall, emaciated, yet radiant, his straight, glossy hair so long that it lay upon the collar of his coat, throwing into bold relief his long neck and keenly sensitive face?

His hands were of the psychic order, and were of marble whiteness, save the thumb and first finger of the right hand, that were stained from constant cigarette rolling — for he was an inveterate smoker — and he had the longest fingers I have ever seen on a human being; they were, in fact, part of his general appearance of lankiness, that would have been uncanny, but for the geniality and sense of *bien être* that he gave off. His voice, low in tone, had an endearing quality in it, that was almost like a caress. He never made use of vernacularism and was without the slightest Scotch accent; on the contrary, he spoke his English like a world citizen, speaking a universal tongue, and always looked directly at the person spoken to.

I have since heard one who knew him (and they are becoming scarce now) call him the man of good manners, or "the mannerly Stevenson," and this is the term needed to complete my first impression, for more than the traveller, the scholar or the author, it was *the mannerly Stev-*

enson that appeared in our midst that day. He moved about the room to a ripple of repartée that was contagious, putting every one on his mettle — in fact, his presence was a challenge to a *jeu d'esprit* on every hand. How self-possessed he was, how spiritual! his face glowing with memories of other days.

He had just come from Saranac, Saranac-in-the-Adirondacks, that had failed to yield him the elixir of life he was seeking, where he had spent a winter of such solitude as even his courageous wife was unable to endure.

His good spirits were doubtless on the rebound after good work accomplished, for there, in "his hat-box on the hill," as he called his quarters at Baker's, were written his "Christmas Sermons," "The Lantern Bearer," and the opening chapters of "The Master of Ballantrae." In this "very decent house" he would talk old Mr. Baker to sleep on stormy nights, and the good old farmer, never suspecting that Stevenson was "anybody in particular," snored his responses to those flights in fact and fancy for which there are those who would have given hundreds of dollars to have been in the old farmer's place. But it was the very carelessness of Mr. Baker that helped along the talking spell. This is often the case with authors; they will pour out their precious knowledge into the ears of some inconsequential person, a tramp as likely as not, picked up by the way; the non-critical attitude of the illiterate seems to help the thinker in forming a sequence of ideas; this explains, too,

why the artist values the lay criticism — it hits directly at any false note in a picture, thus saving the painter much unnecessary delay.

Sometimes Dr. Trudeau, also an exile of the mountains, would drop in professionally on these stormy evenings and would stay until about midnight, having entirely forgotten the nature of his visit. Stevenson had this faculty of making friends of those who served him. To the restaurant keeper of Monterey, Jules Simoneau, who trusted him when he was penniless and unknown, he presented a set of his books, leather-bound, each volume autographed, and this worthy man has since refused a thousand dollars for the set. "Well," he explained, "I do not need the money, and I value the gift for itself." I think this friend of Stevenson's must feel like Father Tabb in the library of his friend when he said:

> "To see, when he is dead,
> The many books he read,
> And then again, to note
> The many books he wrote;
> How some got in, and some got out.
> 'Tis very strange to think about."

But to return to our story.

Stevenson's Isle-of-the-blest was calling to him, and hope lay that way, where life was elementary and where a man with but one lung to his account might live indefinitely. Not that he feared to die. Oh, no! It takes more courage sometimes to live, but it was hard to give up

at forty, when one just begins to enter into the knowledge of one's own powers. A blind lady once said to me, in speaking of a mutual friend, "When Mr. B. comes, I feel as if there was a *sprite* in the room," and this is the way I felt about Stevenson, for during those moments of serious discussion when most people are tense, he moved actively about, and his philosophies were humanized by his warm, brown eyes and merry exclamations.

Another reason for the sprite feeling, was that he was consciously living in the past that day, and each face was like reseeing a milestone long passed, on some half-forgotten journey.

It was this sense of detachment that, more than anything else, gave us the feeling that he was already beyond our mortal ken, that he was living at once in the visible and in the invisible, one to whom the passing of time had little significance. I think this is true, more or less, of all those who are marked for a brief earthly career.

By this time the other members of the family had arrived. His mother, Lloyd Osbourne, and Mrs. Strong, his step-children; "Fanny," his wife, was in California, looking after some property interests she had there, and provisioning the yacht chartered for the voyage to the South Seas. In all his enterprises she was his major-domo, and her devotion no doubt helped to prolong his life. Their mutual agreement on all financial matters reminded me of a remark made by mine host at a country inn, who, in speaking of his wife, said, "She is my very best invest-

ment,'' and so was Mrs. Stevenson to her husband, *Lewis*, for so the family called him, and never Robert Louis. I am inclined to think that yoking of contrasts is an important part in Nature's economy of things. Ella Wheeler Wilcox said to me that she owed her success to Robert — her husband — because in all her undertakings he went before and smoothed the way; but Mr. Wilcox's version of the case is another story. ''I keep an eye on Ella,'' said he, ''to prevent her from giving away too much money.''

Stevenson was now seated before the grate, the flickering light from the wood fire illuminating his pale face to transparency. Now and then he relapsed into silence, gazing into the fire with the rapt look of one who sees visions.

''Are you seeing a Salamander,'' I asked, ''or do the sparks flying upward make you think of the golden alchemy of Lescaris?''*

''A Salamander,'' he replied, smiling. ''Yes, a carnivorous fire-dweller that eats up man and his dreams forever.''

''Gracious! But you are going to worse things than Salamanders, the Paua,† they will get you, if you don't watch out.''

And then, suddenly becoming conscious of my temerity in interrupting the thread of his reflections, to cover my embarrassment, I ran upstairs for my birthday-book.

* Lescaris was a Greek shepherd who discovered the secret of transmuting the baser metals to fine gold.

† Paua — Native name for the Tridacna Gigus, a huge clam. When it closes on any one, his only escape is by losing the limb.

An autograph!

Of course. And he wrote it, reading out the quotation that filled in part of the space. It was one of Emerson's Kantisms, something about not going abroad, unless you can as readily stay at home (I forget the exact words). It was decidedly malapropos and called out much merriment.

> "Oh, stay at home, dear heart, and rest;
> Home-keeping hearts are happiest."

Somebody quoted, to which another replied:

> "Home-keeping youth have ever homely wits."

The autograph has long since disappeared, but how often have I thought with regret of the amused expression in Stevenson's eyes at the Salamander fancy! What tales of witchery might have been spun from those themes worthy of the magic of his pen, the fire-dwelling man-eater, or the discovery of the Greek shepherd!

Stevenson was amused over our enthusiasm, and the eagerness of some of the younger members of the company to lionize him.

"And what do you consider your brightest failure?" inquired our host.

"'Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,'" he replied, without a moment's hesitation, adding, "that is the worst thing I ever wrote."

"Yet you owe it to your dream-expedition," some one reminded him.

"The dream-expedition?" he repeated. "Yes,

that was perhaps a compensation for the bad things."

Benjamin Franklin has said that success ruins many a man. The success of "Trilby" killed Du Maurier, and many authors have had their heads turned for far less than the Jekyll and Hyde furore that swept the country at that time. But the Mannerly Stevenson carried his honors lightly. Smiling over the popularity of the "worst thing he ever wrote," he revealed that quality in his own nature that was finer than anything he had given to print, the soul whose indomitable courage could bear the brunt of adverse circumstance, and even contumely, and hold its own integrity, becoming a law unto itself.

Here was the man who had passed himself off as one of a group of steerage passengers on that memorable trip across the Atlantic on his way to Monterey in quest of the woman he loved, the man whose life was more vital in its *love-motif* than any of his own romances, the man who, in spite of ill-health and uncertainty of means, yet paid the price for his heart's desire.

"See here," said a lusty fellow, lurching up to him one day on deck. "You are not one of us, you are a gentleman in hard luck."

"But," added Stevenson trimphantly, in telling the story, "it was not until the end of the voyage that they found me out."

This points the saying that it was the great washed that Stevenson fought shy of, and not the greater unwashed, with whom he was always on the friendliest terms.

He talked delightfully, too, on events connected with his journey across the plains, which he made in an emigrant train, associating with Chinamen, who cooked their meals on board, and slept on planks let down from the side of the cars.

"The air was thick," said he, "and an Oriental thickness, at that."

But this period of his life was a painful subject for his mother, who was present, and some of his best stories were omitted on her account.

He told us, however, about being nearly lynched for throwing away a lighted match on the prairie. "And all the fuss," said he, "before I was made aware of the nature of my crime." Both his mother and Sydney Colvin had done their best to make him accept enough money, as a loan, to make this trip comfortable. But he had refused. He was, he explained, "doing that which neither his family nor friends could approve," and he would therefore accept no financial aid.

"Just before starting," said he, "being in need of money, I called at the *Century* office, where I had left some manuscript with the request for an early decision, but was politely shown the door."

Consternation seized us at this announcement, for all present knew the editor for a man of sympathy and heart. But Stevenson himself came to our relief with, "But Mr. Gilder was abroad that year."

After the lapse of more than a quarter of a

century, it might not come amiss to recount another little incident at the same office.

I mentioned one day to Mr. Gilder that some notes by Mr. Eaton written during his last illness had been rejected. "You don't mean to tell me that anything by Wyatt was rejected at this office," said he, and going into an inner room, returned in a few minutes with a goodly check. "There," said he, as he put it in my hand, "Send in the notes at your convenience."

Stevenson laughed good-naturedly over the dilemmas the editors of western papers threw him into, by their tardiness in paying space rates for the stories and essays that now rank among his finest productions. Indeed one wonders whether he would have survived the hardships of those Monterey days, had not the good Jules Simoneau found him "worth saving," a circumstance for which he is accorded the palm by posterity rather than for the flavor of his tamales.

In many ways it is given to the humble to minister to the needs of the great. A distinguished author once said to me: "I could never have arrived without the help of my poor friends."

As Stevenson went from reminiscence to reminiscence, we felt that from this period of his vivid obscurity might have been drawn material for some of his most stirring romances, and we were rewarded as good listeners by the discovery of that which he thought his best work, namely, the little story called "Will o' the Mill."

"Ah!" exclaimed Mr. Sanborn, his eyes beam-

ing, "if you live to be as old as Methuselah, with all the world's lore at your finger-ends, you could never improve on that simple little story."

We teased Stevenson a good deal on the hugeness of his royalties on "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," which, besides having had what the publishers call a "run," was bringing in a second goodly harvest from its dramatization, by which his voyage to the South Seas had become a reality.

Remembering his remark that his idea of Purgatory was a perpetual high wind, I asked him: "Why have you chosen an island for your future habitat; or, if an island, why not Nevis in the West Indies, where one is in the perpetual doldrums, so to speak?" "There will be no more wind on Samoa than just enough to turn the page of the book one is reading," he replied; and windless Nevis was British, you see, and his first necessity was to get away where nobody reads. Like Jubal, son of Lamech, who felt himself hemmed in by hearing his songs repeated in a land where everybody sung, so he was shadowed by the Jekyll and Hyde mania in a land where everybody read.

The very essence of his isolation is felt in a playful little fling at a Mr. Nerli, an artist, who went out there to paint his portrait, as well as the boredom everyone experiences in sitting to a painter:

"Did ever mortal man hear tell, of sae singular a ferlie,
Of the coming to Apia here, of the painter, Mr. Nerli?

He came; and O for a human found, of a' *he* was the pearlie,
The pearl of a' the painter folk, was surely Mr. Nerli.
He took a thraw to paint mysel'; he painted late and early;
O now! the mony a yawn I've yawned in the beard of Mr. Nerli.
Whiles I would sleep, an' whiles would wake, an' whiles was mair than surly,
I wondered sair, as I sat there, forninst the eyes of Nerli.
O will he paint me the way I want, as bonnie as a girlie?
Or will he paint me an ugly type, and be damned to Mr. Nerli!
But still and on, and whiche'er it is, he is a Canty Kerlie,
The Lord proteck the back and neck of honest Mr. Nerli."

Which shows that he was not altogether free from bothers even after reaching his "port o' dreams" in running away from Purgatorial winds, only to be held up by a paint-brush! Also, as most of us when excited fall back upon our early idiom, so Stevenson, in jest or lyric mood, drifted into the dialect of his fathers.

We found, much to our surprise, that Stevenson knew every nook and cranny of the Sanborn estate, and told us of his trespassings — in their absence — in search of fresh eggs for his breakfast, having observed that the hens had formed nomadic habits, laying in the wood-pile and in odd corners all over the grounds. This was during a former visit when he stayed at Wainwright's, a landmark that has since been wiped out by fire.

"One day, as I walked by," said he — meaning the Sanborn place — "I heard a hen cackling

in that triumphant way that left no doubt as to her having performed her duty to the species. I vaulted the fence for that particular egg and found it, still warm, with others, on its bed of soft chips. After that, I had an object in my long, solitary walks. New laid eggs for all occasions! And why not," he asked merrily, "seeing there was no other proprietor than Chanticleer Peter, who had been the victim of neglect so long that he would crow me a welcome, and in time became so tame that he would spring on my knee and eat crumbs from my fingers?"

The Sanborns were in Europe that year and, all things considered, is it any wonder that he took the place for being abandoned?

"Nothing but my instinct for the preservation of property kept me from smashing all the windows for exercise," said he.

"I am glad *thee* was good to Peter," said Mrs. Sanborn. Her extinct brood was a pain still rankling in her bosom. She found Peter frozen stiff on the bough on which he was roosting, after his hens had disappeared by methods too elemental to explain.

They had left no servants in charge, and neighbors there were none to restrain the attacks of marauders, and they were prize leghorns, too. She almost wailed.

What a shame!

Well might all bachelors who are threatened with a wintry solitude take warning by unhappy Peter.

But he is not without the honor due to mar-

tyrdom — is Peter, for Mrs. Sanborn had him stuffed, and presented him to "Fanny," who took him to California, where he survived the great San Francisco earthquake.

"He must have been our mascot," said Lloyd Osbourne to me long after, "for the fire that followed the earthquake came just as far as the gate and no farther."

Since the cup that cheers is not customary in Quaker homes our hostess proposed an egg-nog by way of afternoon collation and all entered with zest into the mixing of the decoction. One brought the eggs, another the sugar-bowl, while our host went to the cellar for that brand of John Barleycorn that transmutes every beverage to a toast.

Now, while Stevenson came to regard new-laid eggs as the natural manna of the desert, he had his doubts as to the feasibility of egg-nog, seeing that milk is a necessary constituent. He did not know, you see, that a little white Alderney cow was chewing the cud of salt-meadow grasses in the woods nearby, and, even as he doubted, Mrs. Sanborn and her Ganymedes had brought in a jug of the white fluid, topped with a froth like sea-foam.

"It's nectar for the gods on Olympus," said I — meaning the milk.

"True Ambrosia of the meadows," agreed Mrs. Sanborn.

"Well, this is Elysium, and *we* are the gods to-day."

Elysium-on-Manasquan.

"To be more exact," said Stevenson, "it should be Argos; it was there they celebrated the cow, as we are now celebrating ——"

"Tidy," said Mrs. Sanborn.

"Io," corrected Stevenson, waving his fork, for he, too, was helping to beat the eggs:

"Argos-on-Manasquan."

He lingered over the name Manasquan as though he enjoyed saying it.

"The first thing that impressed me in travelling in America," said he, "was your Indian names for towns and rivers. Temiscami, Coghnawaga, Ticonderoga, the very sound of them thrills one with romantic fancies. Why do you not revive more of these charming Indian names?"

"We are too young yet to appreciate our legendary wealth," said Mr. Sanborn, with an emphasis on the "legendary."

"*Qui s'excuse, s'accuse,*" reminded Mrs. Low, who was a French woman.

"Quite right," assented Mr. Sanborn, "it is not precedent we lack, but valuations."

"To return to Argos," said Mrs. Sanborn — the peace-maker — "I always feel in the presence of a divine mystery when I milk Tidy. No one could be guilty of a frivolous thing before the calm eye of that little cow."

Mrs. Sanborn possessed the reverent spirit of the pre-Raphaelites which burned modestly in its Quaker shrine or flared up like lightning as occasion required; and she delighted in the deifi-

cation of her little cow. And why not? Had not Tidy's worshipped ancestors nourished kings of antiquity, and given idols to their temples, and stood she not to-day as perfect a symbol of maternity?

I do not now remember whether it was referring to Samoa as Stevenson's "port o' dreams" that brought up the discussion of dreams. To some one who asked him if he believed that dreams came true, he replied, "Certainly, they are just as real as anything else."

"Well, it's what one believes that counts, isn't it, and one can form any theory in a world where dreams are as real as other things, and is it the same with ideals?" somebody ventured.

"Ideals," said Stevenson, "are apt to stay by you when material things have taken the proverbial wings, and are assets quite as enduring as stone fences."

"And was it a want of faith in the durability of stone fences, or ignorance of their dream-assets, that accounts for the way that Cato and Demosthenes solved their problems?" was the next question, but as this high strain was interrupted by more frivolity, my thoughts again reverted to the solidity of Stevenson's dreams, that now furnished his inquiring soul with new fields for exploitation, as well as a dominant interest to fill up the measure of his earthly span.

He regretted leaving the haunts of man, he told us, particularly the separation from his

friends, which was satisfactory, coming, as it did, from the man who coined the truism that the way to have a friend is to be one.

But this was his fighting chance, "and a fellow has to die fighting, you know." What was civilization anyway to one who needed only sunshine and negligée? Thus in no other than a tone of pleasantry did he refer to his condition, and never have I seen a face or heard a voice so exempt from bitterness. He told me, in fact, that he was unable to breathe in a room with more than four people in it at a time. This sounds like an exaggeration, or one of the vagaries of the sick, yet things that seem trifles to the well, can be tragic to the nervous sufferer. Mrs. Low has told me that at a dinner of only five or six covers Stevenson would frequently get up and throw open a window to breathe in enough ozone to enable him to get through the evening.

He was embarking to the lure of soft airs and long, subliminal solitudes, accepting gracefully the one hope held out, when the crowded habitations of cities had become a torture. We felt the pity of the enforced exile of so companionable a spirit, but we did not voice it, feeling constrained to live up to the standard of cheerfulness he had so valiantly set for us.

Mr. Eaton, who boasted that, in him, a good sea captain had been spoiled to make a bad painter, encouraged Stevenson to talk freely of his plans, and he dwelt at some length on the beauty and seaworthiness of the yacht *Casco*, that had been chartered for the voyage. This sea theme

led, of course, to the inevitable fish stories, and after some mythological whale had been swallowed by some non-Biblical Jonah, I remarked, in the lull that followed, "Maybe the waters of the South Seas will yield you up a heroine."

A laugh went around at this, for some present thought I had said a "herring." But Stevenson had no doubt as to my meaning. "I am always helpless," said he, "when I try to describe a woman; but then," he added, brightly, "how should I hope to understand a woman, when God, who made her, cannot?" As straws show how the wind blows, so this little joke throws light on Stevenson's state of mind toward womankind in general. During this heroine discussion, he remarked that he was always "unconscionably bored" by the conversation of young girls. He had no desire, it seems, to mould the young idea to his taste, as Horace, when he said:

> "Place me where the world is not habitable,
> Where the Day-God's Chariot too near approaches,
> Yet will I love Lalagé, see her sweet smile,
> Hear her sweet prattle."

Even as a school-boy he was unable to mingle with lads of his own age. This, doubtless, is another of the precocities of the early-doomed, who feel that every moment of life they have must be lived to the full. A well-known artist, who was suffering with tuberculosis, once said to me, in describing his working hours at the studio, "I must make every touch tell, and

every moment count.'' So to Stevenson the rounded out sympathies of maturity were more attractive than the sweet prattle of girlhood, because, like the painter, with his paint, he, with his life, had to *make every moment count.* This, of course, explains his having chosen a woman so much older than himself as a life-companion; a woman in whom he could find a response on his own mental plane.

In the following little poem, which is perhaps his best known tribute to his wife, he embodies in cameo clearness my own early impression of the intrinsic qualities of her character:

''Trusty, dusky, vivid true,
With eyes of gold and bramble-dew,
  Steel-true and blade-straight,
The great artificer
  Made my mate.

Honor, anger, valor, fire;
A love that life could never tire;
  Death quench or evil stir,
The mighty master
  Gave to her.

Teacher, tender, comrade, wife,
A fellow-farer true through life,
  Heart-whole and soul-free,
The august father
  Gave to me.''

It was at the Lows' Apartment in New York that I first met Mrs. Stevenson. I called one afternoon to see Mrs. Low, who was convalescing from an illness. She sent word that she would

be able to see me in half an hour, and I was shown into the living-room, where, meditating by the fire, sat Mrs. Stevenson. She seemed exceedingly picturesque to me, in a rich black satin gown, her hair tied back by a black ribbon in girlish fashion and falling in three ringlets down her back.

She told me stories of her first arrival in New York that were as amusing as some of Stevenson's prairie experiences. She engaged a messenger-boy to pioneer her through the great stone jungle, not from fear of pickpockets or the like, but to save her from a helplessly lost feeling she always had when alone on the streets of a strange city. On arriving, she went directly to the old St. Stephen's Hotel on University Place and Eleventh Street, registering thus:

"Mrs. Robert Louis Stevenson (wife of the author of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde)."

To those of the friends who smiled over it, she explained that, being ill at the time, she had a horror of dying unknown in a hotel room and being sent to the morgue.

I replied to this by telling her how my mother, being alone at a large London hotel for a night, insisted on having one of the chambermaids sleep with her, no doubt from the same sense of hopeless wandering in a similar Dædalian Labyrinth.

Years after, some autograph collector hunted up that old St. Stephen's register and cut the name from the page, which reminded me of a little story I once told Mrs. Low.

As a boy Mr. Eaton one day mounted the pulpit of the church in the little village of Phillipsburg, P. Q., Canada, where he was born, and made a drawing on one of the fly-leaves of the Bible. When it was later told in the village that he had exhibited at the Paris Salon, someone cut the leaf from the Book of Books.

When one starts story telling to a good listener, little incidents dart through the brain that for long have lain dormant, and to pass the time, I told Mrs. Stevenson that on the day Mr. Eaton finished his portrait of President Garfield for the Union League Club, he asked the newly landed Celtic maid if she would wash his brushes for him (an office that he generally performed for himself), to which she exclaimed joyfully, "To think that I have lived to see the day that I washed the brushes that painted the President of the United States!"

What the artist regarded as an added chore to her already full labors, was to her willing hands a pride and an honor. It may be a truism that a rose by any other name would smell as sweet, but there certainly seems to be a good deal in a view-point. In looking back, I know that I grasped, that day, something of what the later years proved her to the world, for I read her then, as a highly gifted woman who had submerged her own personality in the greater gifts and personal claims of her invalid husband and in a recent reading of her Samoan notes there was imparted to me, by means too subtle to explain, those glimpses that insight bestows,

WYATT EATON AS A STUDENT
Photo by Kurtz, N. Y.

that are called reading between the lines — a realization of the hardship of much of her life in the South Seas. I felt distinctly the undercurrent of troubled restlessness beneath the apparent good time of an unusual environment.

To the woman who loves becoming toilets and the vivacity and movement of life in literary and social centres, and who, moreover, possesses the useful hands and right instincts both in artistic and domestic relationships, the long sojourns in desolate places, the doing with makeshifts and the like that these entail, are a real deprivation, and a persistent irritation that calls for the counteraction of an exceptional degree of poise and self-mastery.

Nothing, in short, emphasizes this sense of her isolation, to my mind, so strongly as Stevenson himself in describing her quarters on board the schooner *Equator*, as a "beetle-haunted most unwomanly bower," and this simultaneously with the reminder that it will be long before her eyes behold again the familiar scenes of rural beauty dear to her memory.

The pen sketch of Stevenson forming the frontispiece was drawn by Mr. Eaton in a few minutes from memory. I regret to say that it is reproduced from a reproduction, the original (owned by Mr. S. S. McClure) could not be found, when wanted, Mr. McClure being in France at the time, but we were glad to obtain one of these copies, now becoming rare.

I have never seen a portrait of Stevenson that equalled his appearance that day. The bas-

relief by Saint Gaudens approximates it somewhat in ethereal thinness, but the *verve*, the glow, the vital spark, are lacking even in that.

It has always been a satisfaction to me that our meeting was on an occasion when his illness was least apparent. My memory of his face has nothing of that pain-worn expression so often seen in photographs.

The afternoon of the day we received his message, I caught a glimpse of him at a distance from my window. He was coming up from the Inlet, where, no doubt, he had gone to take a plunge. There was a briskness about his movements that seemed like the unconscious enjoyment of sound health, and in appearance he certainly was as romantic a figure as any of his own characters. Whenever I read "In the Highlands," I see him as he appeared at that moment, treading through a maze of bright sabatia and sweet clover, the mental picture, as it were, becoming a part of that beautiful and touching poem:

> In the highlands, in the country places,
> Where the old plain men have rosy faces,
> And the young fair maidens quiet eyes;
> Where essential silence cheers and blesses,
> And for ever in the hill-recesses
> Her more lovely music broods and dies.
>
> O to mount again where erst I haunted;
> Where the old red hills are bird-enchanted,
> And the low green meadows bright with sward;
> And when even dies, the million-tinted,
> And the night has come, and planets glinted,
> Lo! the valley hollow, lamp-bestarred.

O to dream, O to awake and wander
There, and with delight to take and render,
Through the trance of silence, quiet breath;
Lo! for there, among the flowers and grasses,
Only the mightier movement sounds and passes;
Only winds and rivers, life and death.

I felt the poetry of the day more poignantly as the hour for parting approached, and when the sun began to wane, I went out on the lawn to see the place under the spell of the lengthened shadows and the mellow sun-rays that turn the tree-trunks to burnished gold. This has always been my favorite hour, this charmed hour before sunset, when we can almost feel the earth's movement under our feet — an hour that transcends in poetry anything that can be imagined by the finite mind.

I walked up and down under the cedars bordering the river, to quiet my emotion. It was there, too, under the cedars, that a remark of Mr. Eaton's, in describing to me his first meeting with Stevenson, flashed across my memory: "He combined the face of a boy with the distinguished bearing of a man of the world."

And I thought, as I saw him then, merrily recalling the scenes and escapades of student life, "How well the distinguished man of the world had succeeded in keeping the heart of a boy!"

A passage in Mr. Low's book, "A Chronicle of Friendships," that recalls that day most vividly, is this: "Stevenson never once excused himself from our company on the plea of having work to do." For so it was with us;

he seemed to have no cares or preoccupations, but to be content to be there, enjoying the conversation and the pleasantness of the passing hour.

I had a cosy quarter of an hour with his mother after my walk, and off by ourselves, in a corner, away from interruption, she spoke of her son's childhood. In her eyes, he was still the "bonnie wee laddie" who scouted about in his make-believe worlds among the chairs and tables in the drawing-room while she entertained her friends, and we repeated bits from "A Child's Garden of Verses."

I think that if there is any clue to the character of a great man we must look to his mother. Mrs. Stevenson embodied the idea of her son's peculiar charm; there was the same triumphal youthfulness, and her cheeks were round and rosy like a ripe apple.

I think of the mother now, after so many years, as the crowning influence of the day, quiet and reticent, but always felt, and honored by all as became the mother of our welcome guest.

In her letters, written in the Marquesas to her sister in Scotland, she carries out this impression of habitual freshness of spirit, and her humor is subtle and optimistic: "Nothing gives me more pleasure or a better appetite than an obstacle overcome." She shows herself the life of "The Silver Ship," as the people of Fakarava dubbed the *Casco*, and never a word of criticism or complaint is penned at any inconvenience or annoyance endured by the way. Indeed, one

marvels at her tranquillity in the midst of so many complications — just as one wondered at the simplicity of Queen Victoria in her diary. One of the chief delights in the perusal of these letters is the questions they project into the mind of the reader. Is it a style, a native virtue, a mannerism, a fad, or what?

For example, she never suspects that the French man-o'-war in one of the bays may account for some of the good behavior of the natives, or that their bounty in cocoanuts and bread-fruit may be tendered with an eye to the novelties to be had in exchange, but accepts all in good faith, as part of their native generosity.

And what a joy it is to see her taking holy communion with these people, so lately reclaimed from cannabalism, and taking the ceremony *au grand serieux*"! Thus, a missionary within, a warship without, the amenities of religion and society are enjoyed to the full.

One lays down these letters and laughs, many a time, where no laughter was intended. Certainly, she was a good mixer as well as the born mother of a genius.

Stevenson's death is an anomaly no less pathetic than his life, for in eluding extinction by consumption, he probably achieved a still earlier end by apoplexy. I had the account from Mrs. Low, who received it directly from "Fanny" by letter. Mrs. Stevenson was mixing a salad of native ingredients of which Stevenson was very fond, when he joined her in the kitchen, complaining that he was not very well, and sitting

down, laid his head on her shoulder, where in about twenty minutes he expired.

I said at the beginning that I was not disappointed in the personality of Stevenson, but it would be nearer the mark to say that my anticipations fell far short of the reality.

It is often the case in meeting literary celebrities that one has the feeling that they are first authors, and after that men. Rodin, the French sculptor, focuses this idea by saying that "many are artists at the expense of some qualities of manhood." With Stevenson one was clearly in the presence of a man, and after that the scholar and the gentleman.

Was it not this fine distinction that, in spite of woolen shirt and a third-class transportation, awoke the suspicions of his companions of the steerage, that prompted the already quoted remark, "You are not one of us?"

And on that memorable journey across the plains, seeking the woman of his choice, resolved, though penniless and unknown, to make her his wife in spite of every obstacle, the truth that the frailty of the body is no criterion for the strength of the spirit is well brought out. It was, in fact, this quality of initiative that constituted his chief charm — the quality that, above all others, made us so spontaneous in his presence and so proud of his achievement.

We knew that we were seeing him at his best, surrounded by his old friends, and with the light of the memory of his youthful ambitions on his face. We knew, too, that the parting would be

a life-long one, and that we would never look upon his like again. This regret each knew to be uppermost in the mind of the others, but when the good-byes began, we made no sign that it was to be more than the absence of a day.

Nevertheless, the tensity of the last moments of parting was keenly felt. Stevenson had planned to spend his last night at Wainwright's, and Lloyd Osbourne was to row him across the river. Mr. Eaton and I went down to the river-bank to see them off and to wave our last *adieux.*

The rumble of carriage-wheels in the distance, and the reverberations of footsteps and voices on the old wooden bridge grew fainter and died away, before the little boat was pushed off; and then, these two friends, Robert Louis Stevenson and Wyatt Eaton, both at the zenith of their life and powers, and both hovering so closely on the brink of eternity, sent their last messages to each other, across the distance, until the little boat had glided away, on the ebb-tide, a mere speck in the gray transparency of the twilight.

FATE OF THE *CASCO*

There are ships that, like certain people, seem created for an unusual and distinguishing destiny, and are unable long to survive the destruction of those peculiar conditions that have given them their dominating qualities, animation and color. Mr. Francis Dickie of Vancouveur, B. C., has described with a vivid pen the later adventures and slow foundering of the *Casco.*

This gentleman has kindly given me permission to reprint it here. Our sympathy goes out to the beautiful yacht in her lonely buffetings and chill decay, but though stricken and vanished, we know that she will live long in romance and in song as "The Silver Ship."

FATE OF THE *CASCO*

by

FRANCIS DICKIE

Forty miles from Nome, Alaska, breaking under the Arctic winter on the shores of bleak King Island, lies the skeleton of a wrecked topmast schooner.

Early in June, 1919, a small crew of adventurous spirits had turned her nose out through the Behring Sea, headed for the Lena River and Anadyn — and gold. She was small and old, this yacht, but what are thirty-three years when a craft has the proper tradition for daring, hazardous adventure?

September storms swept upon the *Casco*, pounding her teak sides with unfamiliar Northern blasts. Fog, cold, night — and she lay shuddering on the rocks, snow-beaten, ice-broken, abandoned by her crew.

So ships pass and become smooth driftwood on scattered beaches. But sometimes the magic of long adventure will gather around an abandoned hull, and form a rich memory to tempt the eternal wanderlust of man. What is an old ship but a floating castle built upon the memories of the men who have helmed her? Sometimes she plies the same dull course throughout her existence. Sometimes she changes trade with surprising chances. So it was with the *Casco* — now a glittering pleasure yacht, whim of an old millionaire, now stripped of gaudy

trappings and bent to the grim will of seal hunter and opium trader.

In the opening of Robert Louis Stevenson's novel, "The Wrecker," with red ensign waving, sailing into the port of Tai-o-hae in the Marquesas, the *Casco* takes her place in fiction. But she is far more romantic as she has sailed in fact.

"Winged by her own impetus and the dying breeze, the *Casco* skimmed under cliffs, opened out a cove, showed us a beach and some green trees, and flitted by again, bowing to the swell . . . from close aboard arose the bleating of young lambs; a bird sang on the hillside; the scent of the land and of a hundred fruits or flowers flowed forth to meet us; and presently"—

Presently they sailed among the Isles of Varien, sunny and welcoming in the South Seas.

Stevenson wrote this in the cabin of the *Casco*, in the summer of '88. His always delicate health had broken completely under the San Francisco climate. Friends had urged a cruise to the South Seas, he had gladly acquiesced, and looked around for a ship. There was a subtle romantic call for the author of "Treasure Island" in a voyage on a ship of his own choosing and direction under the soft skies of the tropics.

The *Casco* had been built by an eccentric California millionaire, Dr. Merritt, for cruising along the coast, and no money had been spared in her fittings. She was a seventy-ton fore-and-aft schooner, ninety-five feet long, with graceful lines, high masts, white sails and decks, shiny brasswork, and a gaudy silk-hung saloon. She

was not perhaps too staunch a cruiser. "Her cockpit was none too safe, her one pump was inadequate in size and almost worthless; the sail plan forward was meant for racing and not for cruising; and even if the masts were still in good condition, they were quite unfitted for hurricane weather."

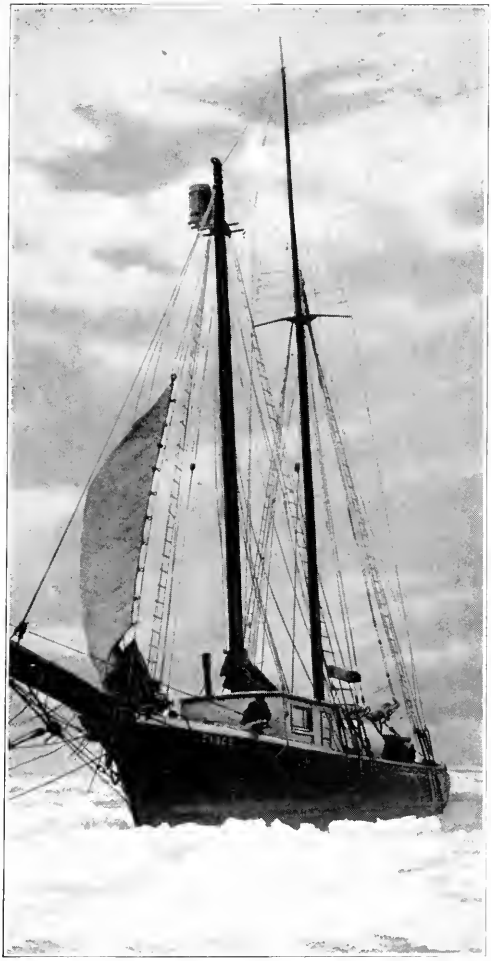
Nevertheless, negotiations were opened with Dr. Merritt. That gentleman had read of Stevenson. He had conceived him as an erratic, irresponsible soul who wrote poetry and let everything else go to the devil. He'd be blamed, he said, if he'd let any scatter-brained writer use his precious yacht. Finally, a meeting between the two was effected; and, speedily charmed by Stevenson's manner, he decided to let him have the *Casco*. Therefore, with Capt. Otis as skipper, four deck hands, "three Swedes and the inevitable Finn," and a Chinese cook, the Stevensons sailed June 28, 1888, for the Marquesas.

Stevenson's health rapidly improved in the first weeks of the voyage. He was charmed by the Southern islands and began making notes and gathering data from the natives for later books. He wrote parts of "The Master of Ballantrae" and of "The Wrong Box," and spent much of his time studying the intricate personality of his skipper, whose portrait afterward appeared in the pages of "The Wrecker."

After months of idle cruising, it was discovered that the *Casco's* masts were dangerously rotten. Repairs were immediately necessary.

Meantime Stevenson became less and less well. When the ship was again in commission and took them to Hawaii, he realized the impossbilty of his returning to America, and, sending the *Casco* back to San Francisco, started upon the exile that was to terminate in his death.

Thereafter, the *Casco* changed hands frequently, exploring the mysteries of seal-hunting, opium-smuggling, coast-trading and gold-adventure, among other things. In the early nineties, she was known, because of her swiftness, quickness and ease of handling at the wheel, to be the best of a hundred and twenty ships engaged in the extinction of the pelagic seal. But when, in 1898, the sealers found themselves impoverished by their own ruthlessness, the *Casco*, her decks disfigured with blood and her hold rotten from the drip of countless salty pelts, was discarded and left to rot on the mud flats of Victoria. Too much of the spirit of adventure, however, lurked in the tall masts of the *Casco* to let her waste away to such an ugly ending. When the smuggling of Chinese and opium was at its height, up and down the coast there were whisperings of the daring work of the smuggler *Casco*. The revenue officers knew positively that she was laden with illicit Oriental cargo, and with Chinese immigrants; but she escaped them again and again, her old speed and lightness returning. Once, however, the wind failed her, and the revenue launch hauled alongside. Search for contraband was instituted; but not a Chinaman appeared, not a trace of opium. Fooled!



THE CASCO, JUST BEFORE IT WAS WRECKED ON KING ISLAND
Kind permission of MR. L. W. PEDROSE

— and they climbed down sheepishly into their launch. Later it developed that while the revenue men were still far astern, the crew had weighted the sixty Chinamen and dumped them overboard along with the opium!

From the swift romance of opium running the *Casco* turned drudge. She carried junk between Victoria and Vancoucer; she was a training ship for the Boy Sea Scouts of Vancouver; she was a coasting trader in 1917 when the shipping boom gave value to even her little hulk; and in between times she lay on mud flats.

In the spring of 1919 came the stories of gold in Northern Siberia. With high hopes of fortunes to be made, the Northern Mining and Trading Company sprang into existence, and the *Casco* was chartered to dare the far Northern seas and icy gaps.

So she died at sea, as all good ships should, with the storm at her back and the mists over her, with snow as a shroud, and brooding icebergs to mourn. She lies cold and stately, with her memories of tropical splendor, high adventure, and light romance — this little ship whose cabin knew Stevenson.

PORTRAITS FROM STEVENSON

by

George Steele Seymour

Jim Hawkins, Jim Hawkins, the treasure ship's a-sailing,
The lure of life is calling us beyond the shining sea,
The distant land of mystery her beauty is unveiling,
And shall we then be lagging when there's work for you and me?

The pirate ship is on the main, Jim Hawkins, Jim Hawkins,
She flies the Jolly Roger and there's battle in her prow,
Then shall we play the craven-heart and lurk ashore, Jim Hawkins,
When fortune with a lavish turn is waiting for us now?

Jim Hawkins, Jim Hawkins, the pirate crew has landed,
With guns and knives between their teeth they're stealing on the prey,
Then let's afoot and follow them and catch them bloody-handed —
When life and joy are calling us, shall we bide long away?
Jim Hawkins, Jim Hawkins!

Is't you, Alan? You of the ready sword
And nimble feet, and keen, courageous eye,
Quick to affront, and yet more quick to spy
Aught that might touch your own dear absent lord!
Hero and clown! How it sets every chord
Athrill to see your feathered hat draw nigh,
And all your brave, fantastic finery!
Romance no stranger picture doth afford.

For I have met you in the House of Fear,
Have watched you cross the torrent of Glencoe
And climbed with you the rugged mountain-side.
We are old comrades, and I hold most dear
This loyal friend and yet more loyal foe
Who bore a kingly name with kingly pride.

Was there a rustle of the leafy bed?
  Heard you no footstep in the matted grass?
  Down the deep glade where fearsome shadows pass
What is it lurks so still? What secret dread
Troubles the tangled branches overhead?
  An ye be foe to this good man, alas!
  No art shall save you though ye walk in brass.
Swift to your heart shall the Black Death be sped.

The woods are still — for that was years ago —
  And now no baleful presence haunts the glade,
    No train-band rules the highway as of yore.
Romance is dead. Adventure, too, lies low.
  Long in the grave is Duckworth's kingdom laid,
    And the black arrow speeds its way no more.

Viscomte, your health. Confusion to the foe.
The noble lord your uncle — bless his name!
And may your wicked captors die in shame.
I kiss your hand; I kiss your forehead — so!
The castle cliff is steep, but down below
Both fortune and the lady Flora wait.
Oh, you will meet them, I anticipate,
Your hand upon your heart, and bowing low.

The stage-coach lumbers heavily tonight.
Its wheels sound loudly on the stony flag.
What's that! A chest of florins in the drag
Gone! And the rascally postboy taken flight!
Ah, well, God send him a dark night, and we . . .
Your health, Saint Ives, in sparkling Burgundy.

Try these perfectos, gentlemen. The flavour
I recommend. A smoke-royal. With white wines
You'll find them fragrantest. That spicy savour
Comes only in stock from the Isle of Pines.
Here are cigarettes, Turkish and Egyptian,
Such as no other merchant has to sell,
And Trichinopoly of the same description
I smoked when I was called Prince Florizel.

That was before I stooped to trade plebeian,
Left my exalted home and wandered far,
Emptied my plate at danger's feast Protean,
Beside the well of wisdom broke my jar.
Till Louis looked from out the empyrean
And in the dust of Mayfair found a star.

THE EBB TIDE

Green palm-tops bending low by silent seas
  Like heads in prayer —
Life's turmoil nor its multiplicities
  Are there.

But only calms and potencies hold sway
  That will not be denied,
Come with the surge of dawn and drift away
  With the ebb tide.

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